

# **Dispatches from Triangulum**

**Reflections on a year of revolt, loss, growth, and  
care from the Triangle region of North Carolina**

Ignatius

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May 2021

Credit to the three anonymous comrades who offered their  
time to give their thoughts and help edit this work.

May 2021



I'll never be able to tell you  
what you've meant to me  
not in earnest, the words don't exist  
not in any language I've found  
Even if they did  
I'm not sure you'd want to know  
So I'll say it here  
for everyone and for no one  
That you've kept me alive  
kept me fighting for something  
when it was cold and dark  
I love you for that  
and for a million things  
that you will never hear me say  
but I hope you know

The following offers reflection on a year beginning in March 2020 and ending in March 2021. This reflection covers personal and political scenes, protests, riots, mutual aid work, isolation, care, and more. These reflections are only meant to speak for the author, not a group or collective. I hope that you are able to take something away from these reflections or at least kill some time.

# MARCH

## 1.

It all travels at a finite speed  
at a definite velocity  
Nothing is instantaneous  
our bodies, our vehicles, our voices, our light  
Andromeda  
our closest galactic neighbor  
lies 2.573 million light years away  
So  
if some amateur astronomer out there  
pointed their telescope to earth  
today  
right now  
they would see an ice age  
Maybe an early bipedal humanoid  
use fire  
Though even that is unlikely  
They would need to watch our planet  
for two million five hundred and seventy thousand  
years  
before they would know  
that you  
or I  
ever existed  
Before the particles of light  
that emanated from the thousands of fires that  
raged this summer

Reach feet, swollen from the day's walking  
Calloused soles cover where the nail went through  
a decade and a half ago

In a minute or two  
the water runs clear

would reach their eyes

Some days I'm struck by  
an intense heartache at this thought  
that we will never be witnessed in  
our reality, only as a holograph  
kept at a time constrained distance  
from even those closest to us  
How even if the sun were to disappear  
in an instant we  
would still live in ignorance  
for a full eight minutes before we had  
even the slightest idea  
of our impending collapse

But other days I find these  
same thoughts an inspiration  
or at least a comfort  
That perhaps the collapse of the  
institutions of our suffering  
is also imminent, existent  
separated through some temporal space  
and we are just ignorant  
of how close it is  
of how delicate our predicament  
of where we need to look  
to find the cracks in our cages

## 2.

They shot a man over a pizza  
cause he ran when they sprinted towards  
him with guns drawn  
So we stand in this Sheetz parking lot  
Not more than 75 of us and as many cops

Heard there are others by the chief's house  
demanding justice  
Heard the lights are off

We make it downtown  
some folks try to give speeches  
A woman gets on a megaphone  
candidate for city council I think  
She demands peaceful protest  
crowd tells her to fuck off  
Two flags get cut down  
on fire as we pass by  
Window shatters and a car alarm goes off  
A young man holds someone's photo  
Begs police to look  
to recognize him as human  
They don't react  
Nothing but shields and helmets and boots  
There's a standoff as I walk to my car  
Everyone makes it out as far as I know  
Stop on the way home  
Soda and a sandwich

### 3.

It looks the same but smaller  
A biopsy of the future  
put under a microscope  
It's the same pain, same emotion  
Could've been then  
But it wasn't

### 4.

The kids were excited

21. I want to wake up tomorrow with no memory  
you ever existed
22. I want to wake up tomorrow

### 5.

The water runs hot  
Dirt pools near the drain  
  
I put hands to my face  
touching cheeks  
One rises up, over my mother's eyes  
reaches the crest of the forehead  
pushes back thinning hair  
The other moves to cover mouth  
lips cracked and thin  
surrounded by unkempt brush  
I trace vessels down my neck  
Let fingers run along collarbone to shoulders  
One sits higher than the other  
from a kink in my back  
kyphosis  
Let arms hang at sides for a minute  
Notice how the view changes  
inhale  
exhale  
Look at the scars on hands  
of burns and cuts  
of an acid spill in high school chemistry  
of a chipmunk bite  
Bend over to give hands access to wide thighs  
and trick knees  
well worn, crack on command  
Find the groove in the shin bone  
excavated by an unfortunate park bench

power offer anything willingly  
So take note, all powers that be  
here are my demands  
I'll try to stick to practicality:

1. A tooth from every cop who dared step on the street in the summer of fire; preferably a molar or canine
2. An ear from every politician who offered to "listen" to the centuries old trauma while brandishing a whip behind their back
3. The kneecap of every prison guard who walks out of work each day while leaving the family they stole from us in a cage each night
4. I want every bar from every cell window
5. I want the bullets from your gun
6. Give me the tires from your cruiser
7. Give up your tie and badge
8. I want the shirt off your back
9. I want flames
10. I need a downpour
11. Give me the nuclear codes
12. and a tank
13. a helicopter
14. a boat
15. I want my friends to be okay
16. I want community, real community  
not just dead ended cliques
17. Burn down the cities
18. Give back the land
19. I want my mom to smile more
20. I want my sister to drink less

for a few weeks  
Extended spring break being  
the only change they saw  
I made plans with old friends  
set up a few calls  
Commiserated over the state of the world  
Took bets like we did in school  
on the chances of snow days  
or delayed openings  
None of us won this time  
Stopped keeping track  
when the reports came out of  
Brooklyn, Iselin, Tenafly  
We worried about our parents  
and grandparents if we still had them  
Called once a week  
but the dead space was heavy  
At least we didn't have to wear  
masks over zoom

## 5.

Sometimes I wish I drank  
If for no other reason than to  
have some way to kill time  
when it appears without warning  
Caught off guard by the length of the day  
Instead I let my eyes lose focus  
blend the paintings on the wall  
remember to blink as tears start to roll  
Salt caught on lips  
Chest trembles  
Weather the tremor  
Unclench jaw

Catch my breath from the marathon I've been running  
every morning this week  
Turn the page of the book on my lap unsure of  
when I opened it  
no concern for the content  
Start over again  
But dad drinks

### 3.

I refuse to work, ever again  
I want to run barefoot  
on the summer grass at dusk  
catching fireflies and letting them go  
They aren't mine to keep  
I want to drive to the ocean on a Tuesday  
only leave when we decide it's time for mountains  
I want to drink  
from a quiet stream  
while I eat breakfast  
and listen to the birds

I'm tired of waking up each morning  
to this world of absurdity  
to this universe of abstraction

I want to use my hands  
build something for someone  
Let the callouses harden and rip  
Let me shiver at the expanse of the milky way  
from a sleeping bag on the shore of a lake

I'm gonna smash my computer to bits  
drill straight through the hard drive  
microwave the motherboard  
I'll get in my car, head to the coast  
Push it off a cliff, into the water  
and start walking

### 4.

They say power cedes nothing without a demand  
I tend to agree as I've never seen

# MARCH

## 1.

The horizon will always bend  
It has no choice in the matter  
nature of sphere is all

And the sun will always get lost  
just across the seam  
Finding its way home soon enough

And I will always be here  
As flesh or as dust  
helping the flowers grow

## 2.

You would lay your head in my lap  
pull my fingers to your forehead  
nails graze the roots as they comb through hair  
And I'd sing to you  
any song you ask for  
as you close your eyes and drift off  
letting the weight of the day roll  
off your shoulders and onto the sheets  
I'd lean and kiss between your eyes  
and your chest rises  
quiet and slow  
We would sit, hold hands  
until it passes through us

# APRIL

## 1.

Shared the idea before thinking it through  
Make a "mutual aid" fund  
with the goal to keep it  
perpetually empty, no balance  
no future plans beyond  
how do we distribute this cash  
as fast as possible  
Hit up the professors  
who have no concept of solidarity  
outside of writing a check  
but we'll take a check

A few grand in the first week  
a few more in the second  
The requests pick up  
We never have enough to meet them all  
We get scammed a few times  
but it is what it is  
We do our best  
spending hours fighting with  
a faceless voice on the phone  
over holds on our accounts  
they don't even have authority to remove

The requests keep piling up  
no way to put a hold on

a utility payment  
a water bill  
and groceries  
or gas  
or groceries  
or diapers  
or groceries

Each morning I check the emails  
from folks desperate  
no more job  
electricity turned off  
running out of food  
And we tell them we don't  
have the funds right now  
but there are other resources  
We're so sorry  
And they're always so gracious  
but sorry doesn't help us keep warm

Fifteen grand we raised and distributed  
in four weeks, eleven months ago  
We still get emails  
Phone calls  
begging for help  
I don't sleep much those nights

## 2.

Face down on the hardwood (actually linoleum)  
Feel my weight press my ribcage  
into the ground  
Believe if I am to focus hard enough  
I might sink beneath the foundation  
and disappear

sun ray highlighting bridge of nose  
accents a thin smile  
the day is already won  
and I can relax

## 12.

It came on subtle  
and I couldn't tell you  
when I realized in full  
or where it originated  
but I want someone,  
maybe you  
to bring me flowers  
when they bloom  
in spring

## 9.

She struggles across the train bridge  
pleading with her legs to move  
one foot at a time  
Can't look down  
which makes it all the more difficult  
to spot the next step  
It's endearing how hard she's trying  
but I think we'll ford the stream  
on the way back

## 10.

Hold my hand and confide in me  
your proudest moment  
a singular point in which the world clicked for you  
Let me see your lips curl at their corners  
as you think back through your catalogue  
of photographs wheatpasted to your skull  
Embarrassments and triumphs  
Romances and naivete  
It's hard right now  
I know  
but we'll find those moments again  
or make something new  
out of the cloth scraps and rags  
the fires haven't reached  
I've been meaning to learn how to sew

## 11.

If I see you face in the morning  
light through the window of the car

Keep moving until I hit water  
stop for a bit to hydrate  
Continue downward  
Pass the crust  
into and through the mantle  
Reach the core and boil off  
Rise back up through the channels  
of molten rock  
Reemerge as a plume of ash  
from a devastating eruption in Turkey or Japan  
or New Jersey  
Instead I sneeze from the dust  
under my fridge  
and gather the composure to make lunch

## 3.

Cut my palm  
slicing through an onion  
Didn't realize the knife was so sharp  
took a second to start bleeding  
a second longer to start hurting  
Deep, pink  
It will scar  
it does

## 4.

My mom calls to check in  
to ask how I'm doing  
If I'm keeping safe  
and eating alright  
I lie and say I'm good  
I am

and that I'm learning to cook all kinds  
of new dishes  
The last one is more an  
exaggeration than a lie  
She worries, and I don't want to make  
that any worse  
Says she wishes she could touch me  
see my face  
to find some peace of mind  
I don't call enough  
I know that  
But it's good to hear her voice  
Hear her complain about work  
or the neighbors  
like life is still happening  
somewhere out there

saying "I know"  
and "it is what it is"  
that "we'll get them through it"  
But for that night she was lost  
and I watched her struggle  
to find the edge of the woods  
where the sunlight can reach  
That was years ago now  
but I think about it  
when I'm lost in the woods  
and sobbing

## 7.

If I hand you the knife  
could you carve me gills  
so that I might finally breathe  
in this brackish mud

## 8.

I worry he feels like he's on call  
my personal crisis confidante  
For random park meetups at noon  
on a Wednesday  
to talk about bullshit until I  
feel sane enough to drive back home  
and be alone again

I worry I wear him down  
wear him thin  
That my company becomes a burden  
He assures me that isn't the case  
and I try to believe him

I'll make a circus of the courtroom  
Tossing peanuts and cotton candy  
to the crowd  
I'll burn my robe  
walk naked through the halls  
let the sprinklers shower me  
Soap and shampoo down the stairwell

Make me a judge  
Watch the lights go out

## 5.

From what well do you draw your strength  
How deep does it go  
How sturdy the rope  
Have you seen it run dry  
Dug it out with your hands  
fingernails stained with clay  
Have you tasted it go sanguine  
What did you sacrifice  
Who did you offer up  
To ensure it fills for a few more years  
or days

## 6.

It's late  
I'm awake thinking about the  
time I held her as she sobbed  
and heaved  
sick at the absurdity of a friend's court case  
next date coming up soon  
I just rock her through it

# MAY

## 1.

I never watched the video  
First, because I couldn't  
then there was no need  
The events already on every channel  
broken down second by second  
a slow motion replay on sports center  
Experts read the details of  
the minutes long torture and murder  
of a man  
crying out for his mother

## 2.

I hold my breath  
for days and my chest hurts  
Less because of what happened  
more because of what's coming  
Something is different  
I don't know what  
but it is  
There is a rumbling in the cages  
Fingernails start to fall off  
I don't think they realize  
What it is they're dealing with

### 3.

They fucking did it  
They really fucking did it  
No asking for meetings, no deference to process  
No vanguard no analysis no consensus  
Nothing but righteous audacity

Their hands hold the scars  
that spell out their role  
And their records marked with their courage  
for the paintings they made  
with gasoline

### 4.

News says fifteen thousand people  
were in the streets to start the afternoon  
In front of the courthouse, on its steps  
Need to hang back from the crowd  
I've never been good at listening to speeches  
puts me on edge for some reason

We start marching  
Or the crowd does  
Still hanging back, trying to spot  
familiar faces, for some comfort  
The heat is unbearable and I'm not carrying  
enough water  
Nobody is

The march splits around a park  
I take a break to walk under the trees  
Shade isn't much respite but it keeps  
me on the side  
more room to move, to breathe

Until they are a flood  
Until they are a drought

### 3.

Court is like church insofar as  
wherever there is a group of people  
seeking to enact sanctified violence, court can ex-  
ist

In the absence of a courthouse they'd sooner  
crucify you on the highest hill  
than let you evade justice

### 4.

Make me a judge  
and I'll swing my gavel  
Smash the fingers of the District Attorney  
so that they can no longer point at the accused  
for the jury

Let them cry out in pain  
the way so many families cry out  
when their loved ones  
are marched away for the last time  
in a long time  
or the last time

I'll crack the bailiff's skull  
toss his gun to a child in the audience  
Tell her to have fun  
sing a song for the bullets  
Give them names  
as she fires them off

Make me a judge

Before we try to justify our own cowardice or exhaustion  
We can't face our fears  
Instead we claim we're making the pragmatic decision  
Just keep me out of jail  
I'll help you recuperate your carceral state  
Just keep me out of jail  
I'll give you your photo op  
Just keep me out of jail  
I'll sell out myself  
sell out my friends  
sell out our future  
When this is all said and done I'll carve a tattoo  
    across my face  
down my neck  
across my chest and spine  
so that my position is never mistaken  
“NO FUCKING DEALS”

## 2.

I have no choice to practice my beliefs in a courtroom  
The second I step across the threshold  
remove my hat  
rise and sit on command  
I have sacrificed something of myself  
My only choice is to make them sacrifice more  
to make them bleed  
to make them bleed out from their necks  
from their wrists  
their badges  
their robes

Put my hands to the dirt  
let my palms sink in a bit  
beneath the dust and pine needles  
Try to find some center of things  
remind myself that I exist  
before I lose my body again

We follow the group that goes right  
A friend and I  
couldn't give an explicit reason  
but it's easier to walk downhill  
Cops form a riot line ahead  
we keep walking  
and then we stop  
No shade but a few clouds rolling in

We stand at this corner  
facing the riot line  
Vacant lot to our right  
graffiti on a lone, fenced in, wall  
And the downtown jail on our left, some folks are getting antsy

Bottles are let loose  
I wish they'd throw bricks instead  
and drink the water  
but they're brave  
and that's all that matters

Sheriffs come out from the garage  
Must be where the bottles were headed  
Some bold motherfuckers rush up  
make it inside  
get beat back

The first cannister of the night

is thrown into the crowd of the day  
and children start to scream  
Their parents are confused, some scream as well  
The city police at the corner don't retreat  
but there is red smoke now  
Traffic cones make it into the street  
We've all seen the videos

### 5.

Acted on instinct  
Threw it back  
And I scream, cry for help  
as skin starts to slough off  
But someone is there  
Sweet and calm  
Bandaged up with a glove  
It'll hurt in the morning  
It'll hurt worse in the morning

### 6.

Always at a corner  
Confrontations are always at a corner  
Never in the middle of the street  
where we could drag them  
to our side  
Make them choke as we've choked  
cry as we've cried  
crack them as they've cracked us  
“Hands up Don't Shoot”  
The crowd chants as a threat  
more than a plea  
Older man, white T-shirt

## FEBRUARY

### 1.

From the streets to the courthouse  
to the meetings with lawyers and without lawyers  
Solidarity is replaced with excuses  
Arguments offered in bad faith  
when we don't even know we're offering them in  
bad faith  
We say the deal isn't bad we  
just have egos too large we  
need to cut our losses and move on to better uses  
of our time  
But the losses we cut are our principles  
our movements  
They're our friends and loved ones  
our co-conspirators  
They are the people taken from us  
who we swore to bring home  
The losses we cut are ourselves  
All it takes is a few months under the mildest of  
thumbs  
before we sell out  
before we view ourselves as separate from the  
struggle  
a city away  
Before we throw our hands in the sky and cry out  
“Enough”

down to the creek  
follow the sound back home

## 10.

I used to visit them at the bar  
on Friday nights, after working out  
Drop off french fries  
talk till close, help them kill time  
Keep them from reading whichever  
nihilistic author they were working through  
that week  
We'd catch up and chat with other friends  
who swing by  
It was nice  
and it's gone now  
till lockdown lets up  
maybe forever

says fuck that "Shoot Back"  
I smile and he sees, we  
have a small embrace before we turn back  
to face the riot line  
comrades for the night

## 7.

Of what use is the voyeur to the riot  
The man who wanders about with camera pointed  
As if to shield his eyes from the glare  
or halo  
of the presentation before him  
The line of the crowd, mob, passerby  
is blurred as characteristics are shared  
by inhabitants of the assumed personas

And so where does the voyeur position herself  
to herself  
for herself  
What is to be done for the woman  
Incapable of taking action of her own  
content to live within a constructed fantasy  
even as cataclysmic reality beckons

Why are they here  
What do they want  
Do they want  
Can they even see us

## 8.

Glass, breaking all around  
reflections shattered into fractals

of pain and of reclamation  
of space and of self  
Nothing anyone can do to stop it

## 9.

Need to sit  
legs cramping  
haven't eaten in two days  
and out of water  
Stranger offers theirs, drink with greed  
Smoke flows down the alley  
Coughing follows  
but too tired to move  
A crowd gathers, exhausted  
Heat has long outlasted the sun  
Riot line moves up and we stand  
Nobody has enough water  
to make it through another  
barrage  
A miracle cuts through the gas  
first as light  
then as body  
Young men in a truck call me over  
Get it out of the bed, fast  
No fewer than a hundred cases  
of fresh water  
We pull it into the street  
While cops pull up in a cart  
Truck speeds off  
Hope they made it home  
We have water  
We can fight a little longer

and people suffer for it  
The same few are left to  
pick up the pieces  
Do their best to bear the brunt of crisis  
The philosophers of the scene can't  
be expected to muddy their hands  
in such frivolous work  
No, they have French essayists  
to translate  
and podcasts to record  
trust funds to manage  
Yet they retain the audacity  
to believe themselves capable  
of defining the scene  
I'd sooner kick out their knees  
than take them seriously  
The people that care  
are the ones who show up  
or at least fucking try  
If the scene isn't with them  
then what's the fucking point

## 9.

We walk along the tracks at night  
She says her eyes  
work just fine  
Doesn't need a flashlight  
in the dark  
but I do  
Cut through a field of old  
stumps in between puddles  
I slip on wet ground  
and slide, maintain my balance

**7.**

We stand along the river  
She asks my opinion of this space  
if she's crazy for leaving  
for feeling like she didn't fit in  
that she was excluded  
I say it makes sense  
that I see the same patterns  
the same people stitching them together  
that she isn't crazy at all  
or if she is, so am I  
That I'm sad about the state of things  
but she's right to feel these ways

I ask for her advice  
on how to navigate relationships  
Boundaries with people you care for  
when they exist in spaces  
you won't engage with  
can't engage with  
She says it's hard  
No easy answer  
but if you truly care  
just be there as best you can  
for as long as you can stand it  
Trust your gut  
and your reads on people  
and take care of yourself

**8.**

Each day we fail in our promises to one another  
Plans fall through  
commitments break

**10.**

Crowd is far away now, maybe gone entirely  
I'm alone, trying to leave  
I look for stars but my eyes  
are so burned, everything is a smudge  
Stumble towards where I parked  
A single city cop  
directing traffic  
at two in the morning  
Looks at me  
says nothing but knows  
and we ignore each other  
too tired to worry about the other

**11.**

At home I hear they took a highway  
Guess that's what I get for  
going right at the park, choosing downhill  
Missed them taking a highway  
Could've used the exercise

# JUNE

## 1.

Woke up the next morning  
with no sheets on the bed  
Kicked them off while working through  
a cramp in the night  
The sun is coming in through the blinds  
Someone asks if I'm going back tonight  
Reply that I don't feel up for it  
but I'll drop off some water  
for folks in the street

## 2.

Highway is open  
Radio coming in clear  
The world is ending  
ended  
the old world

Movies told me to expect  
bumper to bumper traffic  
when the apocalypse comes  
arrives  
the apocalypse

I can see a mile ahead  
at least that far behind

I would laugh and clap as you move  
and there is music

## 5.

We talk and shoot a basketball  
around this makeshift court  
Basket found at some dilapidated school  
out in the woods  
Learn about cycles in the scene  
patterns well worn by now  
harmful and severe  
ignored  
inconvenient to look them in the eye

So people keep getting hurt  
They burn out or burn up  
They leave, in one way or another

but the scene stays  
and it stays the same

It needs to die

## 6.

We sit by the bridge  
Four then three of us  
Try to work out a contingency plan  
for if things go to hell  
on a tighter line than expected  
Make a list of supplies  
we should pick up when we get the chance  
Gauze and bandages  
Should look into radios

It's just (the end of the world) a party

2.

Cop came in through the back fence  
and the party scattered  
like teenagers fleeing a house show  
left the guy riding highest to talk  
his way through what ended up being  
a mild request to turn down the music  
We're not too bright  
but we're pretty damn fast  
when we wanna be

3.

Resolutions:  
Destroy the forward progress of time

4.

I don't really like to dance  
My body feels uncoordinated and too long  
in spots, too heavy in others  
I can't keep rhythm and I never  
know where to look  
I worry about people watching  
or about people not watching  
And spinning makes me dizzy  
But I think  
I'd like to dance  
on the ruins of their cop shops  
on the rubble of their churches  
and of their altars  
You would be there too I think

But I can't see the fires  
rage  
as they burn

The world is ending  
while the radio plays  
today's top 40 hits  
like  
any other day

3.

Carrying a case of water  
awkward, downtown  
looking for the crowd  
Heard they were by the mansion  
It's not too far so  
I'll check it out  
just for a bit

A few clouds overhead but  
the sky is mostly blue  
Air is still heavy with  
the events of the night before  
Crowd is already hot  
shaking a fence keeping them from  
an empty building  
But they keep on down the street

The pigs start putting on their riot gear  
in an empty parking lot  
behind the state bar  
They were cops yesterday  
but today they're pigs  
No real difference

but I hope they hurt today  
moreso than usual I guess

Pigs block the march on a corner  
always on a fucking corner  
Not city this time, state troopers  
Their gear fits better  
I hate them for that  
for everything

They pull the pin on their  
gas cannisters  
while a man in the crowd  
turns towards us  
and demands peace  
The second you turn  
your back on the pigs  
to face the crowd  
to make demands  
you're more them than us  
and you'll get what's coming too  
But the pin is already pulled  
there won't be any peace  
we don't want that anyway

#### 4.

They roll the first one out  
singing in soprano  
I run up  
shoe burns, toe breaks  
nail turns black a week later  
but that pig jumped  
and I saw, in his eyes, he knew fear  
Fear of present pain

## JANUARY

### 1.

We're up on the railroad tracks  
looking for scrap metal the cars kick off  
to slam together  
To make some noise for the folks inside  
A kid burns his hand on a bottle rocket  
for the first of three times that night  
Forget to bring the bottles  
Remember them for next year  
The folks inside start waving  
Towels, clothes, signs, whatever they have on  
hand  
to press up against their windows  
We're encouraged to be louder  
Smacking the ties we find against the tracks, shouting,  
singing  
Someone sets off a birthday present  
from South Carolina and I start smiling  
Each eruption illuminates the side of  
the concrete box  
People are drunk and they're laughing  
They're happy even if just for tonight  
A roman candle makes it into the carport and  
everyone cheers  
A guard closes his blinds and we boo  
No cops come out  
They don't need to

to give up on this rest  
They can't touch me until tomorrow  
so tonight  
they don't  
exist

of future affliction  
of what this crowd  
could make happen  
could destroy  
if we rattle the cage  
to the point  
of rupture

## 5.

I turn as the gun goes off  
I feel pain  
Deep  
Takes away  
the heavy air I had  
managed to force into my lungs  
I groan and fall into the crowd  
afraid to look down  
But the pain subsides  
just a rubber bullet  
Don't notice the blood till  
a few hours later  
when a friend asks if I'm okay

It bleeds for a month  
Had to throw away my sheets

## 6.

There is a calm  
within a moment of rebellion  
within a riot  
that finds its space to breathe  
When the world moves around you

at a million miles an hour  
too fast to process  
and you don't try to process it  
because despite the gas and smoke  
it's the closest you've ever felt  
to understanding where  
you are supposed to be

## 7.

A woman walks her friend over in my direction  
Eyes closed and crying, asks for a flush  
She livestreams the process and boasts  
about learning tactics, and I'm happy for her  
To feel pride in learning something new  
We're in a park and the moon shines through the  
haze  
Crew of teens runs up, looking for water  
They're beaming, outshining the moon  
One says We just hit up a jewelry store  
and pulls a necklace out of their pocket  
I'm busy helping their friend  
but they see me grin  
And I shake my head  
Tell them I'm proud but please  
keep your lips tight  
I don't want to see you on the news  
I want you to feel this way again  
and again

## 8.

It's 3am and I stop at a gas station  
a few miles outside of downtown

in the open clear cut  
to watch the stars fall to earth  
Geminids I think they're called  
Something like that

For a while I miss out  
Neck growing sore from the crooked angle  
But then I catch a few  
lightning bugs in the ionosphere  
burning up between my fingers  
Not mine to keep  
Nobody's to keep

## 4.

I didn't recognize how much I missed them  
until I was driving away  
back down into Pennsylvania  
over a bridge in Phillipsburg  
Something about the river  
and I wept  
heavy, wet  
all the way to Harrisburg  
Drying up in time  
to cross another bridge  
across another river

## 5.

I should be doing work  
Have a meeting in the morning  
about what I've gotten done  
but I can't bring myself to  
turn on the computer

March cut off by riot cops  
an unprepared shield wall  
faces the wrong way  
boxes itself in  
Small scuffles throughout  
  
We make it back to the car  
and stop for food on the way home  
ease some personal homesickness  
Lean on the trunk of the car  
Count constellations while they talk  
And they're both asleep the last two hours  
The road is dark  
but we make it home  
Fall into bed, 4am  
dream about the sky

## 2.

Visiting a friend on my way back north  
Catching up under the awning of the bathrooms  
of a small park  
Rained all morning  
still raining  
These geese want our bagels  
and I swear they are raptors  
when they tilt their heads back to roar  
But there's no way I'm giving up my lunch  
So I roar right back  
And they laugh at me  
waddle away out of boredom

## 3.

Three of us find logs to sit on

far enough to just be some drifter  
passing through on their way to Atlanta  
or whatever is beyond this town  
I stop because I need something to eat  
Blood feels heavy with lead  
Brain is swollen or toxic or both  
Settle on two ice pops, blue and green  
The kind you'd eat while leaning against  
your neighbor's above ground pool  
the week before school starts for the fall  
Limp back to the car, half sit on the hood  
Knees shake, shirt torn, still bleeding  
still burned  
still smell like long expired barbecue  
Waking dream about how good that shower will  
feel  
when I can stand  
hopefully in the morning

## 9.

Folks wanna light up the smaller city  
but the tinder got wet and  
the logs won't catch  
Creation of a liberal mythos is good for that  
Progressive after progressive stands before a  
crowd  
Preaches

We're different than our neighbor down 40  
Our cops don't get caught on film  
pulling their guns on children  
they do that shit in the dark  
Our cops keep the riot line out of sight  
behind the fence for now

Our protestors are peaceful  
Our protestors are polite, conscientious  
Anyone who dares challenge that  
is an outsider, not of us  
cast them out  
turn them over

And so the myth takes hold

## 10.

An argument in the middle of the street  
about militance, about who's to blame  
when the cops crack skulls  
Some folks wanna take the highway  
others feel that's too far  
So we split, not missing a highway again  
A small, vocal crowd heads down the exit  
and we sing and chant to the oncoming headlights  
flanked by cars of our own, blasting music

Make our way back to regroup  
but folks are moving towards us  
Shaken up  
stammering about cops in riot gear  
So we pull down goggles  
Pull up bandanas  
Stuff hands into gloves  
Get ready to do what it is we do  
But a woman grabs me  
tries to pull me out of the crowd  
Says I'm just looking for trouble  
that I need to leave  
that she'll force me to leave

So we sit on the sidewalk  
eating egg sandwiches  
I look up, at least the sky is beautiful

Confrontations with cops start early  
and happen often  
They grab a shield and move to the front line  
I have a hand on their bag, ready to pull  
She's nearby, gets sprayed  
Not sure how I avoided that

Move back down the street  
eat another sandwich  
Find a place to piss  
already my back hurts  
I lie down and stare  
as the clouds transform and translate out of view  
And the sky is beautiful

Cops move in for a snatch and grab  
Can't tell why but they pull a few  
folks out of the crowd  
and the crowd responds with rocks  
Someone draws blood

A megaphone calls for a march  
to meet another group at a nearby park  
It feels bad, wrong to leave  
dangerous for many reasons  
but folks are going  
and staying here alone feels worse  
Sun is setting, clouds are red again  
She points and offers  
“The sky is beautiful”

Rest of the night is a blur

# DECEMBER

## 1.

Alarm goes off in darkness  
I can hear birds outside  
Eyes adjust as I pull on jeans and socks  
grab my bag I packed the night before  
She rolls over on the couch, says good morning  
spoken word sounds strange at 4am  
Step out to the car and take a moment  
to look up at the stars  
Pick them up on the way  
Long drive made easier with company

Pass Richmond at sunrise  
She turns to the window  
“The sky is beautiful”  
What does a red sun in morning mean

Park in the city, less trouble than expected  
and walk to the metro  
Empty for a weekend  
save for a few pigeons  
but there is a plague going round  
heard it's killed half a million

Make it to the plaza  
but don't look the part  
not allowed inside till a friend makes a call

Try to ignore her but she  
steps in front of us  
pulling at our arms  
Ask her to stop, please  
to give me space, let me go  
but she refuses  
The crowd is in two minds  
one panicked, another prepared  
and neither seems capable  
of communicating with the other  
Only the former seems bent  
on enforcing their will on the latter

Days of every news station in the country  
decrying the rioting and looting  
as the work of outside agents  
of undercovers, of anarchists  
has rotted away all sense of reality  
There is no discussion to be had  
with someone convinced they're  
staring down the boogeyman  
Just do your shit and keep moving

## 11.

First attempt  
A rope gets tied around the neck of the statue  
Barely two tugs before the cops swarm  
Some liberal on a speaker screaming  
“This isn't how we do things”  
towards those doing things  
So I trip over the cord to his microphone  
unplug his sound system

## 12.

Second attempt  
It's darker and the ropes are thicker  
A person climbs the obelisk  
and gives a boost with his legs  
A now familiar groan generates  
an excited panic as folks know  
what comes next  
First one, then the other  
Two soldiers of bronze eat dirt  
They get dragged through the street  
like some eclectic funeral procession  
One is hung from a lamp post  
the other dumped on the  
steps of the courthouse  
The cops complain, tell us to get back  
We laugh  
as it starts to rain

and I work at 10  
so I'll head out soon  
but I'll stay another 15

## 6.

They walk down the driveway  
papers in hand  
as ghosts

## 7.

Decry kids held in cages on Monday  
Celebrate the opening of refurbished  
youth migrant overflow facilities on Tuesday  
Tell me  
How do you keep your gums from bleeding  
keep your bowels intact  
while swallowing fistfuls of glass

## 8.

It's going to blow their minds  
when the riots return  
before the scarcity even sets in  
No, they'll be back sooner than that  
Your cops can't help themselves  
fingers always reaching for the trigger

So I make more  
and send them to friends  
in other cities

3.

“Vote for him today, hold his feet to the fire tomorrow”

Why just his feet?

4.

Two hundred turn out in the streets  
on a bitter night  
when we were supposed to be watching  
history unfold  
with advertisement breaks  
Banners were solid  
and the city is on lockdown  
If the cops are following us all night  
so be it  
Less time they're in the neighborhoods  
harassing some kids

5.

Sat outside the jail  
Same way I've done a dozen times  
And I'm tired, and bored  
Someone brings a box of sandwiches  
and a crowd gathers  
I pace along the wall  
of a parking garage  
It's 2 in the morning

JULY

1.

Calls go out for numbers in the street  
Billed as an occupation  
served as a picnic  
on the sidewalk instead of a park  
Across from an empty house  
that we'll scream at for days to come  
Emotions are higher  
than the situation would appear to generate  
Word of a mass arrest  
earlier in the day  
first in a month or so  
Whole scene reeks of civil disobedience  
I can stomach that for a night  
Gets harder when I meet  
the self-appointed security team  
When they tell me to  
leave the nazi who walked up alone  
Tell me they'll handle the situation  
By handle they mean ignore  
Don't tell me not to curb  
a fucking nazi

2.

Spend the night to support

the work of younger folks  
getting their feet under them  
End up talking to the perennial  
city council candidate  
about the nature of violence  
She asks if abolition is possible  
without it  
She's confused when I ask why that matters  
She leaves before I get an answer

Pace around through most of the moon  
Some sleep, some huddle together  
and talk in hushed tones  
to not wake others  
Security starts doing rounds  
at 4:30 or so  
To let us know the cops asked us to move by 5  
And that we should comply  
I'm too tired to be annoyed  
At least I can get breakfast  
on the way home  
Bojangles I think

### 3.

On security roles  
Kill the radical security team in your head  
Destroy the part of your brain  
that thinks it wise to partition vigilance  
responsibility  
to designated groups  
of always mostly men  
with a control complex  
We should all be capable  
of defending ourselves

## NOVEMBER

### 1.

They say we need to vote  
Get our mail-in ballots  
to let our voices be heard  
in the most important decision  
of our lives  
They say  
on the TV  
But they're wrong  
I already made the most important  
decision of my life  
five years ago  
on the top floor of a parking garage

### 2.

Drew up some flyers  
for an action the night of  
Rip the pics from some  
press photographer's twitter  
He took them during the summer  
during the riots  
He's mad that we used them  
Says it's co-opting, against copyright  
I can't stop laughing at him  
thinking I give a shit about copyright

But to invoke that mask, a risk itself  
To lift the veil of ignorance  
clouding the question  
that if we were to ever cry out  
cold, alone, hungry  
Would we be heard by those  
who we wish would clothe and feed us  
Or will we be confronted with the reality  
of our own isolation and abandonment  
or simply the ineptitude of those from whom we  
desire care

The unceasing paradox  
of yearning to be soothed and nurtured  
without suffering the ordeal of being witnessed  
And so we keep our faces clean  
Keep the mask in the drawer  
Rise and sing to the morning

defending each other  
I don't want some  
crew of ex marines  
having any say in where my body goes  
or how I use it  
Tell me not to level a fascist  
one more fucking time  
and the next one's for you  
They'll sooner hand you over to the pigs  
for hammering at cobblestone  
than keep you safe from  
whatever threats actually exist  
I don't feel safer  
with them here  
I don't need any more eyes  
watching me

#### 4.

There is a blind rage that often accompanies  
the visual of authority impressing itself  
on the bodies of those you care about  
Where the boundary of what you will risk  
begins to shift beneath your feet  
Not for bravery,  
but because you can't stand  
to watch

Shouts become more pointed  
Gestures more threatening  
Eyes dart from badge to badge  
scanning for an opening  
Before you realize  
You're in their sights as well

As soon as they put a hand  
on your shoulder and wrist  
It all comes down to instinct  
And you spin out of one  
then out of two  
But the third takes away your legs  
and your face kisses pavement

Boots circle round as a knee  
flirts with cracking your neck  
and your hip  
and you lose the day

### 5.

I'm too tall for the back of the cruiser  
I'm not even that tall  
Shins are forced into hard corners  
Start to bleed, match my wrists  
We make it to the carport of the jail  
a dozen other cars not far behind  
They leave me to sit in a miserable heap  
until they get their stories straight

The door opens but I'm still wedged  
Can't get to my feet  
I slump out, onto concrete  
Uniform in the punisher mask  
apologizes for my wrists  
said they were rougher  
than they needed to be  
Can't help but laugh  
It would've made a good joke  
if he intended it that way

A man at a gas station notices  
me pumping away  
filling up the  
back right tire  
Says It'll take you all day  
Asks if I need change for the air compressor  
I say it's alright, I'm almost done  
He laughs and shrugs, says I'm crazy  
and walks away  
I like to think I gave him  
a story to tell someone at home that night  
Some weird ass dude  
filling up his tire  
with a bike pump

### 5.

In my dreams I write sometimes  
and conduct symphonies  
I play the cello and sing in a sweet sweet tenor  
And it smells of cardamom

### 6.

Our traumas become badges  
to be offered before the altar  
of our connection to one another  
Traded and bartered for sympathy or care  
in a ritual no less grotesque  
than the experiences they stem from  
For if our grief  
manifests itself in any way other than  
the anticipated mask  
then there is nothing to be offered

others quiet, serene even  
A pile of wrapped presents  
in a lonesome corner of a party venue  
No sign of anyone nearby  
save for the photographer

We guess at the reasons  
for the pile of pictures  
in this long-abandoned place  
A retirement party  
a funeral  
maybe a birthday  
The detritus in this room  
damp and torn  
was someone's life once  
now a pile we walk through  
looking out for shards of glass

### 3.

A tree grows through a hole in the roof  
in total defiance of our arrogance  
that the foundations we lay  
will forever be ours to claim  
But a tree grows through a hole in the roof  
and its branches bend in the wind

### 4.

I keep a bike pump in my car  
in case of a slow leak  
in a tire  
and I need to fill it up enough  
to make it home or to a shop

### 6.

For the love of god  
stop fucking talking  
I'd rather sit here in silence  
than hear your attempts to buddy up  
to the pigs who just kicked our shit in  
I know you're scared and I'm sorry  
but please  
Please  
shut up

### 7.

Six hours before I'm processed  
Given a court date  
released on 10k unsecured  
Lucky they're just charging me with riot  
lucky this city has an image to protect  
Can't be seen keeping protestors in jail  
Gotta keep those cells free  
for the real criminals  
for the regular folks without support  
who it's easier to disappear

### 8.

Still have blood on my wrists  
when he presses my hand on the scanner  
taking down my fingerprints  
Everything is digital now  
no more ink and paper  
Missed when they took my mugshot, didn't look  
up

News will show it later

The routine of it all makes me nauseous  
Lightheaded, dizzy  
I hate this and I hate them  
The cops and magistrates  
I hate the sound the doors make  
when they lock and unlock  
I hate the fluorescent bulbs  
and the tile floor  
I'll hate it till it's ash  
or till I'm dirt

### 9.

The streets, same concrete  
look different day to day  
Shape or form stays constant  
but the framing changes  
Whether barricades or open lanes  
a garbage truck slowing traffic  
or an armored car shutting it down altogether  
Fresh glass replaces  
plywood boards replace  
broken glass  
The bodega is open  
regardless of the circumstances

### 10.

I walk around town  
because the weather is nice  
for the first time in a while  
Tiptoe atop stone walls

## OCTOBER

### 1.

It was christmas time  
when they were evicted  
Season betrayed by calendar pages  
and decorations left around  
A large, jolly, santa head  
still hanging in the doorway  
above a half-decayed rat

Discarded toys mark a child's room  
puzzle pieces and broken crayons silent  
on a shelf in the closet  
A few shirts hung above  
whispers of the colors they used to be

Holes in the walls, sink smashed in  
copper's been stripped  
An old tv, bright yellow, cathode ray  
Serves as a doorstop  
Not broken  
Just left behind

### 2.

Photographs are caught in the couch cushions  
Some capture posed family members  
Smiles surrounding a central figure

And I smile, big, goofy grin  
She has to go, can't stay much longer  
Needs to convince herself not to  
come back to my place

She wins the argument with herself  
Gets a plant in a wine bottle from her car  
Apologizes for not removing the label  
asks me to take care of it

And I have  
It sits on my desk by the window  
Only living thing in my apartment  
most days

imagine I'm up high on a wire  
overlooking the rush hour crowd  
A breeze blows back my cap  
and I stumble out of fantasy  
No use fighting gravity  
So I return to earth  
unharmed  
to rejoin the crowd

# AUGUST

1.

For weeks the momentum wanes  
Tires spin in the mud  
Frustrations spill over as projects  
fail to take flight  
or crash and burn only seconds  
after liftoff  
We live in the dead time  
Each second that passes feels wasted  
Too busy avoiding reflection on  
the moments prior to make  
use of the breathing space

Temporal Agoraphobia

Some try to force the issue  
Make attempts to cultivate  
that which can only arise in nature  
Modern agriculture incapable of producing  
And so we gnaw at bones, exhausted  
Trying to squeeze water from stone

Our job cannot be  
to wave our hands and materialize  
the collapse from dust in sunbeams  
We can only build relation to one another  
Prime ourselves to make use of

to look up at the heavens and call out for respite

Yet each week, it flows  
carries away my words downstream  
as I offer exasperation into the ether  
Let the turtles make sense of it

7.

You were in a dream last night  
tapped me on the shoulder  
and I turned, confused  
but it was good to see you  
for however long it was  
and however far from reality  
I wake up to realize

8.

She calls me on her way through town  
asks for a black coffee  
We meet up in a grocery store parking lot  
and it feels just as it should  
Just how she feels  
I think she's in love with me  
but that's not something I'm going to ask about  
and I sure as hell won't admit it first  
So I think I'll never know  
not before it's a memory to laugh at in passing

She looks in my back seat  
through the window  
Says she's trying to get to know me  
without asking questions

and now they can mask their fear  
as pragmatism  
as allyship

## 5.

To the liberal business owners  
saddened to wake and find your storefront  
renovated to an open air design  
I offer you my sincerest wishes that  
you are able to replace that inventory and repair  
your window pane  
as soon as possible  
So that crowbars and hammers don't grow rusted  
in their disuse  
So that arms remain accurate  
when stones are thrown  
That pockets remain full  
from the spoils of your register and shelves  
Don't look here for sympathy  
for your struggling business  
in these trying times  
Chew on the dust from your broken mortar  
and kick rocks

## 6.

The river keeps flowing  
Every time we reach the spot  
where we eat our lunch  
and talk shit about the projects  
we can't seem to keep afloat  
I half expect the water to be still  
to have lost its inertia from the week before

new found fissures  
drive our stakes into their hearts  
during those wonderful moments  
when they are exposed

## 2.

It happens again  
and the city turns out  
not as many as May  
but enough to make them worry  
to make them scared  
Preemptive curfew and everything  
Flags get burned, fences get shook  
words are exchanged with cops not yet in riot gear  
but they will be

Crowd moves fast to the jail  
Chants of love and hope  
Cheers for the folks inside  
that these walls fall soon  
Street art graces a blank canvas  
across the street, calls for  
cages to be emptied  
and for revenge

We stay for a long time  
in this empty lot  
Too many people  
and too much energy  
to justify dispersing  
but nobody willing to take the next step  
And that's okay  
More time to focus on our friends in the windows  
make this night for them

### 3.

Movement in my periphery  
towards front door of the jail  
slipperiest person I've ever seen  
All black  
Brick in hand as the door swings open  
My guts fall out when I see the barrel point  
through  
No time to retreat  
Don't think they'd want to anyway  
Close my eyes before the bang  
Sure I'm about to witness an execution  
Crowd scatters up the street  
but dude is alright  
Spooked a bit  
but no holes from what I can see

### 4.

Flashbang or firework  
Not all that much difference  
in how they function  
Mirrored tools  
one for us  
one for them  
Ours singe fingers  
make colors of the night  
Theirs blow off limbs  
rupture ear drums  
Either way  
folks are gonna run when they go off

about the future  
They have power, and they can use it  
But we'll always be her people  
That she's not alone

### 3.

For the third time in as many weeks  
downtown is made a carnival  
of hammers, stones, and spray paint  
Fires burn  
Storefronts busted out  
Messages left to be read  
by the morning

### 4.

The mayor holds a conference  
to unveil the truth he has learned  
of the vandalism that took place  
the night before  
His police have alerted him  
that the vandals are all  
white folks from out of town  
  
And the liberals spring into action  
as they see their bat sign  
projected onto the clouds  
Everyone writes a blog post  
about how their city is peaceful  
and that this damage hurts the movement  
that they will never, ever, bleed for  
  
They're afraid of liberation

# SEPTEMBER

## 1.

The march is short  
crowd thinner after the students  
got scared off the week before  
But size doesn't always fortell energy  
In minutes rocks and fireworks  
pelt the façade of a jail  
While folks inside wave  
Cheer us on

News says at least three window panes  
will need to be replaced  
That the glass is still breaking to sand  
as the reporter tries to explain  
the meaning of the protest  
and how many fear the violence  
of a broken building  
Distracts from the message

The message seemed clear to me

## 2.

I look across the porch and tell her  
we aren't going anywhere  
No matter what happens  
That it's okay to be afraid

## 5.

Starts no different than any one prior  
Black has become an aesthetic  
for the university students to wear  
while they put on their performance as subver-  
sives

for their three and half credit hours  
The megaphone echos a militant chant  
while the streets remain orderly

until the march back towards main street

A trash can tips over  
spontaneously combusts  
Barricades around an old courthouse  
are tested, thrown, discarded  
Windows are stress tested, relieved of their frames  
New art is put on display  
While the speakers boom

The university students don't know  
where they should run to  
Terrified when confronted with  
the reality of the ephemera  
with which they've covered themselves  
But all I care about  
This city  
will not be called polite  
in the papers tomorrow

## 6.

Security guard  
in heroic effort

tries to defend the honor  
of a store front  
Pulls his taser  
on a teenager  
Too busy to notice  
his car  
falling apart

mom,  
there's nothing else to say

7.

A bottle of wine  
is not part of my typical  
protest gear, but  
who am I to judge  
Not like my cliff bars  
are any more useful  
when the rocks start flying

8.

Eat dinner, watch the sunset  
from the highest parking garage in town  
Large fries and two cheeseburgers  
Diet coke, no ice  
Car radio doing its best to provide a soundtrack  
Venus shines through early  
Through the pinks and purples  
The breeze is nice,  
Old Friend  
I hope you're well

9.

He makes me smile,